ER Site No. 61C: Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Schoolhouse Bldg

ADS: 1334
Operable Unit: Central Coyote Test Area

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Site History

ER Site 61 was identified as Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site in the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments Act (HSWA) Module. For investigation purposes it was subdivided into three subsites; 61A, 61B is still an active site and ownership was transferred to Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) in May 1995. Site 61Awas used as a blast testing site and was investigated and discussed separately ER Site 61A.

ER Site 61C, Schoolhouse Mesa Test Site: Schoolhouse Building, covers approximately 5.4 acres on federally owned land controlled by the United States Air Force (USAF). This inactive site is located on the Schoolhouse Mesa, approximately 1,500 feet west of ER Site 61A, north of the intersection of Demolition Range Road and an unnamed dirt road that runs through the Kirtland Air Force Base (KAFB) Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) range. The mean elevation of the site is 5,802 ft (amsl).

The Schoolhouse Building (Building 9850), a L-shaped, one-story stucco structure approximately 35 feet (east-west) by 30 feet (north-south), is divided into three rooms. An extensive electrical outlet system coursing around the interior room walls was apparently powered by generators at several connection points outside the building.

Along the wall in the northernmost corner of the building, is an abandoned sink. The sink plumbing system consists of a water inflow line and a drain line. The inflow line runs from a supply tank set atop a tower near the northwest corner of the building. Water to the tank was supplied from the Schoolhouse well located approximately 150 feet west of the Schoolhouse Building. The adjacent inflow and drainpipe pass through the building wall on the north. From there the pipes immediately turn downward and enter the subsurface. At about 1.5 feet below the ground surface, the drain line abruptly stops. A buried electrical grounding rod was found connected to the drain line. There are no other drains, piping, or plumbing fixtures evident around the building.

A soil mound, once thought to be the leachfield for a septic system, is located approximately 150 feet north of the building. The crescent-shaped soil mound has a maximum relief of between 4 and 6 feet. The soil mound is approximately 120 feet long (north-south) and 70 feet wide (east-west). A former magazine, of which only the concrete pad remains was used for explosives storage and is located in the southwest bank of the arroyo channel, 280 feet northeast of the Schoolhouse Building. The former magazine was approximately 4 feet long and 3 feet high and had a capacity to hold between 15 and 20 pounds of high explosives (HE) compounds. The remaining concrete pad is 7 feet square. A groundwater monitor well (the Schoolhouse well), located approximately 150 ft west of the Schoolhouse Building, is used by the Sandia National Laboratories / New Mexico (SNL/NM) Site-Wide Hydrogeologic Characterization Project.

This site gets its name from the report that it was once used as a schoolhouse building for children from the neighboring ranches. At an unknown date, the site was taken over by the military and the building, along with a portable military trailer, were used as a machine shop for wood, steel, and aluminum. The trailer was reportedly parked on the site from 1951 to 1960, but the exact location is not known. A small quality oforganic compounds may have also been kept on the premises. Former employees also indicate that the building was used for shelter, instrumentation and equipment storage, and a laboratory for pressure gauge work.. Site activities reportedly stopped around 1980 and the building has fallen into disrepair since that time.

There are no sanitary facilities apparent at the site. No outhouses, privy pits, or leachfields have been located or reported. The only plumbing, piping, or drain system found in the building is the one associated with the sink drain. The building was not occupied on a regular or routine basis and permanent sanitary facilities were located at he area headquarters, Building 29095, about one-half mile west of the site. If necessary portapotties were brought to the site. Any other waste disposal practices are unknown.

Aerial photographs show that the Schoolhouse Building, water tank, and water supply well were present prior to 1951. A very vague structure (which can only be seen with considerable magnification) situated between two trees, shows that the former HE magazine was present prior to 1975.

Previous Investigations - ER Site 61C was identified during investigations conducted under the Comprehensive Environmental Assessment and Response Program (CEARP) and described as an explosives testing area that used HE compounds and depleated uranium (DU). In 1988, surface soil samples were collected at the site and a groundwater sample was analyzed from the well. The CEARP finding was uncertain for the Federal Facility Site Discovery and identification findings, preliminary assessment, and preliminary site inspection. Site 61C was not investigated as part of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) facility Assessment.

In November 1993, KAFB Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel conducted a surface unexploded ordnance (UXO) and high explosive (HE) survey in conjunction with ER Sites 9 and 20. The survey identified and removed one live groundburst simulator, six smoke grenades, two flare illuminating cartridges, and three 40-millimeter White Star parachute cartridges.

In February 1993, SNL/NM Radiation Protection Operations (RPO) staff surveyed the Schoolhouse Building and the surrounding area for radiation with a Geiger-Muller detector with a pancake probe and found no radiation above background activities. In February and April 1994, RUST Geotech Inc. completed a surface gamma radiation survey of ER Site 61C in conjunction with Sites 7, 61A, and 20. No point or area sources of gamma activity 30 percent or greater than natural background were identified during the survey of Site 61C.

RCRA Facility Investigation (RFI) confirmatory sampling took place in March and April 1998. A risk-based no further action (NFA) proposal was submitted to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) in May 1999. In September 1999, NMED indicated that the site was appropriate for NFA petition.

Constituents of Concern

Metals
HE
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
Semivolatile Organic Compounds (SVOCs).

Current Hazards

There are no current hazards at this site related to contamination of the surface or subsurface soils. The building remaining at the site is slowly decaying and is used by local wildlife for nesting. This portion of Schoolhouse Mesa is used for military training exercises and UXO (blank, small arms cartridges) are found in the area surrounding the building. A groundwater monitor well is located in an open underground vault approximately 150 feet west of the building. Gray, metal 55-gallon drums for purge water are usually present on the adjacent ground surface.

Current Status of Work

RFI Work Plan submitted to EPA in November 1994.

A housekeeping Volutary Corrective Measure (VCM) removed approximately 10 cubic yards of nonhazardous debris in March 1997.

RFI sampling conducted in March and April 1998. A No Further Action (NFA) proposal was submitted to the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) for Site 61C in May 1999. Site 61C was found acceptable for NFA in September 1999. The NFA was approved by NMED in October 2000 after completing the public review and permit modification process.

Future Work Planned

None

Waste Volume Estimated/Generated

Approximately 10 cubic yards of nonhazardous trash were generated during a housekeeping VCM in March 1997.

Information for ER Site 61C was last updated Nov 7, 2001